

Recent records of vagrant South American land birds in Panama

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Received 11 October 1986

In the course of leading natural history tours to Panama in the years 1979-1985, we obtained sight records of 3 species not previously known from the republic (Ridgely 1981). Taken together with other records from that period, these sightings reveal a pattern of vagrancy involving South American landbirds of open woodlands and savanna. It is possible that this pattern has been caused or greatly enhanced by large scale clearing of forest in Panama and Colombia. Here we give details of our observations and discuss factors which may predispose these species to vagrancy.

RUBY-TOPAZ HUMMINGBIRD *Chrysolampis mosquitus*

An adult male was discovered at the El Real airstrip, Darién Province on 27 January 1985 by D.E.W. and 6 tour participants. What was presumed to be the same bird was still present in the same area on 3 February 1985 when the entire party of 12, including M.J.B., was able to study it. The tail, which was bright rufous with a black subterminal band, was often held fanned open in a colourful display while the bird was perched. The feathers of the hindcrown and nape usually appeared erected in a shaggy crest and the feathers of the forecrown extended onto the base of the bill, making the forehead appear low and sloping. Photographs were obtained by P. Moynihan and are on file in the VIREO collection of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, where their identity has been confirmed by R. Ridgely.

The bird frequented an open copse of small trees in a tall grass pasture near the airstrip. El Real, the largest settlement in the Darién, is surrounded by cut-over pastureland which almost surely represents the largest area of open country in the heavily forested eastern Darién. Thus, this was a reasonable place for *Chrysolampis* to appear, an open country hummingbird, whose known range is in the drier, open habitats of northern and eastern South America, from Colombia to northeastern Bolivia, including the islands off the north coast of South America from Aruba to Trinidad and Tobago (Meyer de Schauensee 1970). In Colombia, *Chrysolampis* is known locally from dry Caribbean lowlands, inter-Andean valleys, and arid rain-shadow valleys of the Western Andes (Hilty & Brown 1986). The closest record to Panama is from Parque Nacional Los Katios (Rodriguez 1982; *vide* W. L. Brown), which abuts the Panama border less than 100 miles from El Real.

GREY-CAPPED CUCKOO *Coccyzus lansbergi*

On 10 February 1980 a single individual was found by V. Emanuel and M.J.B. in open brush along a sluggish stream in marshy pastureland near Tocumen, Panama Province. The diagnostic features of slate-grey crown,

contrasting with dull rufous brown back, and ruddy chestnut throat lightening to cinnamon buff on the abdomen were well seen. Subsequent sightings of this species, both of them also at Tocumen, occurred on 7 Jan 1982 (B. Whitney, J. Rowlett and B. Barth) and 23 Dec 1985 (L. O'Meallie and T. Meyer). Another individual was discovered on 30 January 1985 at Cana, Darién Province by D.E.W. and others. Like the Tocumen birds, this individual was also seen in thickets draped with vine tangles along a small stream.

The normal range includes open woodland, forest edge and savanna in the Caribbean region of northern Colombia from near Cartagena east into Venezuela and south to the northwestern foot of the Andes (Hilty & Brown 1986). On the Pacific slope it is known from southwestern Colombia (one record in upper Anchicaya Valley – Hilty & Brown 1986), western Ecuador (including breeding records – Marchant 1960, R. Ridgely) and northern Peru, rarely south to Lima (Koepcke 1970). Although *C. lansbergi* was reported in the older literature to occur in Panama, Wetmore (1968) found no basis for its inclusion in the avifauna of the country.

DWARF CUCKOO *Coccyzus pumilus*

V. Emanuel and D.E.W. recorded this species on 9 February 1979 in brushy vine tangles in damp pastureland near Tocumen, Panama Province, within 2 miles of the site of the *C. lansbergi* records. The small size, pure medium-grey crown, rich rufous face, throat and upper breast, and creamy-white abdomen were diagnostic. The Dwarf Cuckoo normally occurs in gallery forest, open forest patches, and tree-lined or shrubby pastures in drier regions of northern Colombia from near Cartagena east through the Venezuelan llanos (Hilty & Brown 1986).

Discussion

Records of vagrant South American landbirds are relatively few and have received little analysis. This is true in part because the Neotropical avifauna is still comparatively poorly known, and it is hard to distinguish between records of true vagrants and rare residents. However, the birds of Panama are better known than those of most Latin American countries, so the 3 species mentioned above have probably not been more than rare visitors to Panama in the past. It is therefore interesting to note that they share several characteristics which may predispose them to vagrancy.

First, each is known or suspected to be migratory in at least part of its range. Mention of possible migratory behaviour has been made for the Ruby-topaz Hummingbird in Trinidad (French 1973), the Netherland Antilles (Voous 1983), and Brazil (Ruschi 1982); for the Grey-capped Cuckoo in western Ecuador and Peru (Marchant 1960, Parker *et al.* 1982, R. Ridgely); and for the Dwarf Cuckoo in the Venezuelan llanos (Thomas 1978). Second, all 3 species favour comparatively dry open country, and their ranges may have been limited historically by humid lowland forest, clearing of which by man may have allowed them to expand their range. Range expansion has been documented for the Dwarf Cuckoo in

Colombia (Ralph 1975), where in the last 3-4 decades, the species has invaded the dry inter-Andean valleys and forest clearings on the humid Pacific coast and in western Amazonia. Finally, there are previous vagrant records for each of these species. The Ruby-topaz Hummingbird has occurred once on Grenada (Bond 1971) and at sea off the Netherland Antilles (Voous 1983); the Grey-capped Cuckoo has occurred once on Bonaire (Voous 1985); and the Dwarf Cuckoo has occurred as a wanderer at several Colombian localities which it later colonized (Ralph 1975).

Other species that recently have been recorded in Panama for the first time and seem to fit this pattern of vagrancy or range expansion or both are the Cattle Tyrant *Machetornis rixosus* and the Lined Seedeater *Sporophila lineola* (Ridgely 1981, American Ornithologist's Union 1983), both of which occur in the dry open country of northern South America, while the Cattle Tyrant is believed to be migratory in the southern part of its range. Should destruction of rain forest in northwestern Colombia and eastern Panama continue at its present rate, more Panamanian records of these and other open country species as vagrants and possible colonizers can be expected.

Acknowledgements: We thank B. Whitney and L. O'Meallie for permission to report their observations of Grey-capped Cuckoos, S. Hilty and W. L. Brown for information on the distribution of these species in Colombia, R. S. Ridgely and B. T. Thomas for comments on an earlier version, and J. Hopkins for typing and editing the manuscript.

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